

**Research-Based Curriculum
Teacher Created Materials**

***Exploring Nonfiction: A
Differentiated Content-Area Reading
Program***



Introduction

Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program combines effective instruction of reading comprehension strategies with standards-based nonfiction content topics. “Research over 30 years has shown that instruction in comprehension can help students understand what they read, remember what they read, and communicate with others about what they read” (Armbruster, Lehr and Osborn, 2003). This program helps students develop comprehension strategies and nonfiction reading skills in the social studies, science, math, and language arts content areas. Teacher Created Materials updated this popular research-based program with the creation of this second edition in order to continue to support effective reading instruction and help close the achievement gap evidenced in schools around the country.

The goals for every teacher should be to have academically successful readers who will also take pleasure in reading and learning for life. “It is likely that students who are capable of understanding a wide range of texts choose to read independently for their own enjoyment” (Guthrie and Wigfield 2000). The proficient reader, either consciously or instinctively, engages in active thinking strategies throughout the reading process in order to gain comprehension. To help students become proficient readers, today’s effective teacher must have a variety of teaching strategies, exceptional resources, and quality reading materials readily available.

Furthermore, teachers must also prepare students for standardized tests. “Teachers across the grade levels and subject areas have to work collaboratively to shoulder the responsibility of equipping students with the lexical skills to successfully navigate today’s high-stakes, standards-based educational environment” (Feldman and Kinsella, 2005). Beyond literacy-based classrooms, content-area teachers also find that competent reading is an essential skill that strongly correlates to overall academic accomplishment. In addition, when students struggle with basic reading skills, this creates an even bigger gap in academic success as they progress from the lower grades into the content-heavy secondary grades. Students often hold negative attitudes about reading because of dull textbooks or being forced to read (Bean 2000). As students transition to more demanding content and higher-level textbooks in the content areas, struggling readers often find it difficult to comprehend content-area texts.

The Need for Differentiation

Today’s reading classrooms are filled with students of varying backgrounds, reading abilities, levels of English proficiency, and learning styles. Furthermore, teaching reading is not about merely passing on a set of skills that can be memorized or replicated by students. “Learning to read is a complex process. Most children learn to read and continue to grow in their mastery of this process. However, there continues to be a group of children for whom learning to read is a struggle” (Quatroche, 1999).

In this present educational realm of high stakes and accountability, teachers are expected to effectively create instructional activities that address varied student needs. The more that is understood about how students learn, the more it is understood why curriculum needs to be differentiated, especially in reading. “A small but significant portion of otherwise normal American children encounter major difficulties in learning to read when provided regular classroom reading instruction” (Klenk and Kibby, 2000). These struggling students do not need significantly different instruction than their successful reading peers; however, they do need high-quality instruction (Klenk and Kibby, 2000).

Differentiated curriculum takes these issues into account. *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* includes a concentrated focus on differentiation through the strategy-based reading lessons. Each lesson plan includes a variety of instructional strategies to reach students

who are not yet achieving their potential, those who are learning English, as well as those who are successfully moving toward mastery of the standards.

Quality texts effectively communicate their intended purpose and are appropriate for the audience (Alexander and Jetton, 2000). *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* has 80 informational text cards written specifically with differentiated passages: 40 on-grade-level passages and 40 below-grade-level passages. The cards come in pairs with the only difference being the level of readability, and each set of paired cards includes detailed lesson plans. Every lesson includes two lesson options that explicitly focus on a different reading comprehension strategy. The two skill lessons provide multiple opportunities for using each set of differentiated cards. These informational text cards consist of topics that are exciting to the students in the targeted grade level, regardless of their reading ability. As students grow older, studies show they begin to read less. Therefore, it is vital that these students have access to texts that they want to read (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, and Rycik, 1999). The text cards also span over multiple content areas in addition to the varying topics and text structures within each content area. Different types of texts “permit readers to expand and strengthen their grasp of the world” (Moore, et al., 1999). Students learn how to utilize multiple strategies in order to gain greater understanding of content. With these differentiated lessons, students continue the process of becoming independent and skillful readers in the content areas.

What Is Differentiation?

Every student who enters a classroom in the beginning of the school year brings his or her own set of expectations, past learning experiences, preferred learning styles, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. All students, regardless of these differences, enter a classroom with the expectation that they will learn the material. Viewing these differences as strengths to promote academic development is an essential aspect of differentiation. With differentiation, the teacher teaches toward the required standards while offering support to struggling students and more challenging activities to higher-performing students. Differentiation has multiple faces depending on the particular students and teachers involved, the outcomes of these learners, and the structure of the classroom environment (Pettig, 2000).

“Differentiation is simply a teacher attending to the learning needs of a particular student or small group of students rather than teaching a class as though all individuals in it were basically alike” (Tomlinson, 2000). Differentiated lesson activities allow students to progress at the appropriate pace for their own learning needs. “Effective differentiation is based on the foundation of good instructional principles. Without good instruction there won’t be effective differentiation” (Starr, 2004). In *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program*, various differentiation strategies are included that allow new and experienced teachers to begin to incorporate the best practices substantiated by extensive research.

“Differentiated instruction is a teaching approach in which educational **content**, **process**, and **product** are adapted according to student readiness, interest, and learning profile” (Starr, 2004). Differentiating the **content** means providing materials at different levels so all students can access the same type of information at their own instructional level. *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* has sets of paired cards for each lesson with the only difference being the readability level. The same text has been leveled between one and two reading grade levels below the grade-level text. The cards are written with the readability level and the scaffolding of the specified reading strategies in mind. “Children learn to read through engagement in a variety of age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate print-related activities” (Klenk and Kibby, 2000).

Differentiation of the **process** requires the use of instructional techniques and materials to motivate students with differing learning styles while enhancing their experiences with nonfiction text. Powerful teachers adjust lesson goals and content to meet student needs (NCSS 1992). In every *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* lesson, there is a sidebar with suggestions for differentiation. This program’s differentiated instruction through process includes suggestions for above-level support, below-level support, and support for English language learners. Struggling readers need teachers who can make in-process instruction adjustments while continually analyzing student learning (Klenk and Kibby, 2000). Students are not expected to complete the exact same activities, and are provided with support to access the content in different ways through preteaching, scaffolding, vocabulary development, extension activities, and cooperative group work. A teacher should not just add more of the same types of activities for advanced students (Wehrmann, 2000). Above-level students are given many opportunities for creative and challenging ways to apply their learning to new situations. This program gives teachers differentiation strategies that can be incorporated into lessons as needed.

Differentiated **products**, or what students show from what they learn, improve students’ abilities to express themselves. “Product differentiation occurs when we allow students to demonstrate their learning through different assessment formats” (Wehrmann, 2000). As one example of product differentiation in *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* the resource strategies book provides many graphic organizers and other activities that can be used with different levels of students to practice application of the comprehension strategies. The differentiation strategies included in the guided practice lessons also provide multiple ways for students to show what they have learned.

Finally, differentiated curriculum provides a chance to challenge but not overwhelm students based on their ability levels. Research has shown that students need to be pushed just beyond their independence levels for real learning to take place (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). As teachers explore engaging content-area concepts through the differentiated text cards in *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program*, they are guided in giving support so that every student in the classroom can meet language arts standards.

Content-Area Reading

Every instructional minute in the classroom is valuable. Elementary school teachers teach multiple subjects. Middle school content teachers have limited time to teach the curriculum. Moreover, proficient reading is an indispensable skill in most of the content areas. Ample content-area reading leads to greater retention of content-area concepts. For example, when children read a lot about science, they learn more science, which in turn, consistently improves comprehension of science-related content (Pressley, 2000). *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* teaches effective comprehension strategies using social studies, science, math, and language arts content. Content-area reading combines content learning with purposeful and meaningful reading activities. In this educational period of demanding pacing charts and instructional schedules, teachers can focus on improving reading comprehension while also acquiring content knowledge. Research has shown that instruction that covers multiple subject areas “is likely to be responsive to children’s curiosity and questions about real life and to result in productive learning and positive attitudes toward school and teachers” (NCSS, 1994).

The cards in *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* are not meant to be as thorough as the content provided in textbooks, but they do provide students with quality nonfiction information. The cards engage learners in effective methods for teaching nonfiction reading skills. While teaching the skills essential for reading nonfiction, teachers are directed to use modeling practices to keep students actively engaged in their reading experiences. Teachers can choose

to use the cards either during reading instruction or as support for content-area lessons. The text cards are divided into the four content area categories – science, social studies, language arts, and math. The types of text might include: magazine articles, newspaper articles, letters, diaries, menus, graphs, charts, diagrams, trade book excerpts, glossaries, prefaces, and more.

The reading strategies needed for reading nonfiction text are different from the strategies needed for fiction text. Students often need additional support in learning how to use these strategies for nonfiction text (Brown, 2003). When Nell Duke did a study that found a scarcity of informational texts in first grade classrooms, (1999) she wrote, “These findings are cause for concern both because of the missed opportunity to prepare students for informational reading and writing they will encounter in later schooling and life, and for the missed opportunity to use informational text to motivate more students’ interest in literacy in their present lives.” Novice readers sometimes “come to the text with limited and fragmented knowledge, low personal interest, and a smattering of strategies that they haphazardly apply. Thus, they need a considerable amount of scaffolding that aids them in building a meaningful base of content knowledge and the seed of personal interest” (Alexander and Jetton, 2000).

Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program spotlights different types of nonfiction texts and concepts. The detailed lesson plans encourage the teaching of specific nonfiction reading skills. The reading comprehension skills essential for academic success increase in the higher, content-heavy grades. Courses in the higher grades are usually dominated by textbooks, which can present difficulties for struggling readers and English language learners. For this reason, learning to read and understand nonfiction text is a critical skill that students must learn. “Scholars have pointed out that informational texts can play an important role in motivating children to read in the first place” (Duke, 2000). “Considering all the newspapers, brochures, guides, maps, Internet sites, and how-to manuals we navigate as adults, it’s safe to say that nonfiction is the genre children will read most often when they grow up” (Taberski, 2001).

One last convincing reason for using real-life text is the use of nonfiction text on the reading comprehension sections of state and national tests (Parkes, 2003). Because students are most often tested on their ability to comprehend nonfiction text, they should have classroom experience with this type of text. Ivey and Broadus (2000) state in *The Reading Teacher*: “Reading nonfiction materials would increase students’ depth of knowledge in the content areas, and probably help students score higher on the standardized tests that are of such concern to teachers and administrators.” ***Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program*** offers teachers quality text in an engaging card format that will help students gain competence in the skills necessary for successfully responding to the standardized testing requirements.

Explicit Instruction of Comprehension Strategies

The seven categories of comprehension strategies that are highlighted in ***Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program*** include monitoring comprehension, activating and connecting, inferring meaning, asking questions, determining importance, visualizing, and summarizing and synthesizing. It is necessary for teachers to provide students with instruction in these strategies in order to enhance learning (Collins, 1994). “Research shows that explicit teaching techniques are particularly effective for comprehension strategy instruction. In explicit instruction, teachers tell readers why and when they should use strategies, what strategies to use, and how to apply them” (Armbruster, et al., 2003).

The topic of reading comprehension is greatly discussed and researched in educational circles but still a

rather complicated topic. “To truly comprehend text is to make connections between the information in the text and the information in the reader's head, to draw inferences about the author's meaning, to evaluate the quality of the message, and possibly even to connect aspects of the text with other works of literature. Reading comprehension has always been the goal of reading instruction, but it is not a concept well understood or easily assessed.” (Wren, 2003) To make matters even more complex, there has been extensive research in the widespread practice of teachers asking post-reading comprehension questions despite the absence of any actual comprehension instruction in the lesson (Pressley, 2001). “It is important to understand that Reading Comprehension (and Language Comprehension) has multiple facets or constructs. It is possible for a reader to understand all of the words in a passage of text, but still to fail to comprehend the text as a whole. Similarly, it is possible for a reader to understand the explicit information contained in a passage of text, but to fail to grasp the implicit message contained ‘between the lines.’ Similarly, it is possible for a reader to appreciate the implicit message contained in the text, but to fail to elaborate on that message, failing to connect it to other text or background knowledge” (Wren, 2003).

Rather than making the process of becoming a good reader a mystery, *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* offers teacher support in explicitly teaching the reading comprehension strategies that are necessary for good reading. “Comprehension strategies are conscious plans—sets of steps that good readers use to make sense of text. Comprehension strategy instruction helps students become purposeful, active readers who are in control of their own reading comprehension” (Armbruster, et al., 2003). “The case is very strong that teaching elementary, middle school, and high school students to use a repertoire of comprehension strategies increases their comprehension of text. Teachers should model and explain comprehension strategies, have their students practice using such strategies with teacher support, and let students know they are expected to continue using the strategies when reading on their own. Such teaching should occur across every school day, for as long as required to get all readers using the strategies independently -- which means including it in reading instruction for years” (Pressley, 2001).

Additionally, within the seven main comprehension strategy categories in *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* there are specific standards-based objectives. Each of the nonfiction skills and strategies taught in the program has additional practice and support opportunities within the included guide book *Successful Strategies for Reading in the Content Areas*. This book contains background information about and teaching ideas for the skills and strategies, including graphic organizers and templates for activities. The updated edition has been grouped to match the seven categories of strategies and skills in *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program*.

There is also a skill focus area on the back of each text card that explains the specific skill or skills taught on the front of the card in student-friendly language. *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* incorporates this section in order to facilitate classroom discussion that builds student metacognition. “Metacognition can be defined as thinking about thinking. Good readers use metacognitive strategies to think about and have control over their reading. Before reading, they might clarify their purpose for reading and preview the text. During reading, they might monitor their understanding, adjusting their reading speed to fit the difficulty of the text and ‘fixing up’ any comprehension problems they have. After reading, they check their understanding of what they read. Comprehension monitoring, a critical part of metacognition, has received a great deal of attention in the reading research” (Armbruster, et al., 2003). Metacognition skills play an important role in reading comprehension. Students begin to internalize the strategies that they have been taught. They are

eventually able to monitor and self-regulate their ability to read. “Developing engaged readers involves helping students to become both strategic and aware of the strategies they use to read” (McCarthy, Hoffman and Galda 1999, as cited by Baker 2002).

Gradual Release of Responsibility as a Model of Instruction

An overall goal of the program is to produce students who are independent, self-motivated readers of a wide range of texts. While some students come upon this goal quite naturally, for other students, it is a struggle. These students need explicit instruction in the skills and strategies for approaching reading tasks. They need ample opportunities to practice these skills and strategies while reading. “Engaged reading is strategic and conceptual as well as motivated and intentional” (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000). Students need the chance to work toward independence and confidence in their reading capabilities.

This process is referred to as *The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model* (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983). Teachers begin by giving direct instruction for a certain reading strategy. They model the strategy and then provide multiple opportunities for students to practice using the strategy. The students are offered guidance and then transition to the independent practice of the strategy while reading in a new situation.

Each lesson in *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* follows this well-known model. After preteaching the vocabulary and building background knowledge, the teacher begins with direct strategy instruction. Research shows that direct instruction of comprehension strategies improves understanding of text, especially when students are taught and given practice in actually using the strategies themselves (Pressley, 2000). The cards were written and designed with a specific reading strategy in mind. Each card lends itself to the use of the chosen strategy. Effective “strategy instruction consists of teachers’ direct instruction, scaffolding, and guided practice in learning from text” (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000). After introducing the reading strategy, the teacher models the skill. Next, students engage in guided practice. Teachers should offer “autonomy support,” which is the guidance the teacher gives in order for students to make choices that are relevant to the comprehension of the text, to identify their purpose for reading, and to establish learning goals (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000). At this point in the lesson, there are suggestions for differentiation of above-level students, below-level students, and English language learners. Finally, the students work on independent practice, application, or extension activities, showing how they can take what they have learned and apply the strategies to new reading situations.

The Active Reading Process

Many students think of reading as a passive activity, especially if they struggle with gaining meaning from reading text. However, research points to reading as an active process. Good readers are very active when they read (Pressley, 2001). They often instinctively engage in active thinking strategies throughout reading in order to gain comprehension. The explicit instruction of comprehension strategies, the guidance in support of metacognition, and the gradual release of responsibility are all served through the before, during and after reading activities in this program. “Content-area teachers can easily optimize the use of reading materials with students by utilizing the three-part framework of the reading process to facilitate learning. Effective teachers break reading assignments into three comprehension-building steps: before reading, during reading, and after reading” (Pressley, 2002). This process is facilitated for teachers in *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* because the back of each text card has a section titled “Comprehension Connection” which includes questions to consider before, during, and after reading. The lesson plan sections (Introduce and Explain, Model, Think Aloud, Guided Practice, Independent Practice) also help teachers to guide students through this active reading process.

As the students practice the process more, students can internalize the active reading strategies in all their future reading.

Fluency Instruction

The National Reading Panel Report (2000) examined scientifically based research in the field of reading and acknowledged five critical factors that are vital to effective reading instruction. These factors, also in the No Child Left Behind Act and the Reading First federal initiative, are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Of these areas, teachers often struggle to incorporate fluency instruction. “Fluency is more complex and essential than most people ever realize (and) the stakes are very high if children do not become fluent readers” (Wolf, 2005).

Timothy Rasinski (2006) defines fluency as “the ability to accurately and effortlessly decode the written words and then to give meaning to those words through appropriate phrasing and oral expression of the words.” Fluency is now seen as directly affecting reading comprehension (Kuhn and Stahl, 2000). “Comprehension is the hoped-for end, not rapid reading. To achieve that goal, we need to build increased automaticity” (Wolf, 2005). Fluency bridges the gap between word recognition and comprehension for readers. “Moreover, when readers read with fluency, they give evidence through their oral interpretation of the text that they are constructing meaning while they read” (Rasinski, 2006). When the text sounds like natural speech, the children are better able to apply their own knowledge and experiences to new learning. Becoming a fluent reader is a skill that develops gradually and requires practice. “Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Because fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding the words, they can focus their attention on what the text means. They can make connections among the ideas in the text and between the text and their background knowledge. In other words, fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time. Less fluent readers, however, must focus their attention on figuring out the words, leaving them little attention for understanding the text” (Armbruster, et al., 2003).

Each *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* lesson comes with several fluency activities from which to choose. Repeated reading is one form of practice that has been found to be vital to developing fluency (Rasinski, 2006). “Students who read and reread passages orally as they receive guidance and/or feedback become better readers. Repeated oral reading substantially improves word recognition, speed, and accuracy as well as fluency” (Armbruster, et al., 2003). In this program, students are given many opportunities to practice reading and they engage in other fluency activities like reader’s theater and creating radio shows in small groups, pairs, and by themselves. There are also Fluency Record Charts provided in the Management book to record reading-rate improvement. “Also, seeing their fluency growth reflected in the graphs you keep can motivate students” (Armbruster, et al., 2003). To ease the calculation of reading rates, the number of words for both the grade-level card texts and the below-grade-level card texts are provided for teacher reference. “Although reading fluency has been on the backburner of reading programs for many years, it is finally being recognized as essential to students’ reading success” (Rasinski, 2006).

Content and Academic Vocabulary

Content-area vocabulary is highly specialized with words that are not typically encountered in everyday life. Therefore, all students need explicit introduction to vocabulary words to understand the text. The task is even more complicated for English language learners and struggling readers. “Developing readers cannot be expected to simply ‘pick up’ substantial vocabulary knowledge exclusively through reading exposure without guidance. Specifically, teachers must design tasks that will increase the effectiveness of vocabulary learning through reading practice” (Feldman and Kinsella, 2005).

It is not enough to give students a list of words and have them look up the definitions in dictionaries or glossaries. Students who are struggling with learning a language are not going to find the process easier by simply being given more words to sort through (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2004). Struggling readers and English language learners need context-embedded activities that acquaint them with the necessary and most central words for comprehension of the content. *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* provides these opportunities at the beginning of every lesson. “Direct instruction helps students learn difficult words, such as words that represent complex concepts that are not part of the students’ everyday experiences. Direct instruction of vocabulary relevant to a given text leads to better reading comprehension” (Armbruster, et al., 2003).

It is imperative to choose the right words to teach. “To responsibly prepare students for a challenging reading selection, a teacher must first critically analyze the text to determine which words are most central to comprehension and thus warrant more instructional time, then consider how to teach these terms in a productive manner, conveying both their meaning and import” (Feldman and Kinsella, 2005). Each lesson in *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* gives teachers that head start by teaching key content vocabulary words and high-utility academic words that students might not know, which can greatly affect overall comprehension of the text. Effective vocabulary development involves a rich contextual environment in which students learn terms as they read content-area text (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short 2004). There is a range of vocabulary-development strategies for each lesson to assist in preteaching the words that are necessary for comprehending the text and learning the new content concepts. There is an additional section, titled Developing Vocabulary, in the included book *Successful Strategies for Reading in the Content Areas*. *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* highlights the necessary content and academic words and provides activities that will best stimulate comprehension.

Support for English Language Learners

Classrooms that support the literacy development of English language learners include students engaged in meaningful activities, as well as cognitively demanding content, while the teacher scaffolds content to ensure that students will learn successfully (Diaz-Rico and Weed, 2002). Scaffolding in lessons, modeling effective strategies for learners to use, and vocabulary development instruction are vital for English language learners. It is important to preteach the words that are critical to understanding the text so that students are provided with a variety of ways to learn, remember, and use the words (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2004). It is not enough to simply expose English language learners to language-rich classrooms; they need “intensive instruction of academic vocabulary, and related grammatical knowledge must be carefully orchestrated across the subject areas for language minority students to attain rigorous content standards” (Feldman and Kinsella, 2005). *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* specifically offers differentiation suggestions for English language learners as well as preteaching activities to develop content-related vocabulary essential to comprehension.

Assessment

The before, during, and after reading activities in *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* engage students in authentic reading tasks and strategies that they will use to understand the text. This is also an excellent opportunity for informally assessing comprehension. “Teachers can build in many opportunities to assess how students are learning and then use this information to make beneficial changes in instruction” (Boston, 2002). In this way, *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* is continually providing teachers with opportunities for accurate assessment. The Assessment book provides teachers with specific assessments

of the strategies and skills, as well as overall pre- and post-assessments that can guide and inform future instructional goals. The teacher is constantly monitoring student progress and making decisions about the next steps in the lesson. “When teachers know how students are progressing and where they are having trouble, they can use this information to make necessary instructional approaches, or offer more opportunities for practice. These activities can lead to improved student success” (Boston, 2002).

Conclusion

Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program teaches essential nonfiction reading skills and strategies using highly motivating informational text cards that span over the content areas. The program includes differentiated texts and engaging lesson plans for the purpose of promoting reading comprehension for all levels of students. “While there are no easy answers or quick solutions for optimizing reading achievement, an extensive knowledge base now exists to show us the skills children must learn in order to read well. These skills provide the basis for sound curriculum decisions and instructional approaches that can help prevent the predictable consequences of early reading failure” (Armbruster, et al., 2003). The ***Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program*** offers quality nonfiction reading material through differentiated information cards. Recent studies have shown that students who are competent readers in content-area reading are overall more academically competent than those who aren’t (Alexander and Jetton 2000). ***Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program*** also provides exciting new information for students in a fun reading format. Opportunities to engage in the active reading process and demonstrate effective comprehension skills are prevalent throughout the lessons. ***Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program*** outlines effective teaching strategies accessible in multiple lesson options for teaching students the necessary reading strategies to become proficient readers of nonfiction texts.

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